

TRAMP IN THE EAST

Luckless Street Wanderers in the Great City.

STONE BREAKER AND CLEANER

The Lordly Labor Master and His Valuable Wit-Scarcity of Food and Uncomfortable Berths.

Most people suppose that these haphazard wanderers who take refuge in the great woods of wilderness have a rather good time of it at the expense of the rule payers. Nothing could be further removed from fact. Some persons and their officials treat "campers" better than do others, but "bad is the best," and, as a rule, London makes rank worse than country ones. It is the very worst of all, for the shopkeepers who constitute the board of guardians—not of the poor, but of the rates—in that parish impose upon casuals a task of stone breaking which no polished man, no matter how powerful or skillful—and there is skill or "knack" in stone breaking, as in other things—could possibly perform in the time allotted, says the Fall Gazette. Hence, as failure to perform the task means being charged at how street as a "refractory pauper," and as magistrates never, or hardly ever, believe against the accused "assault," says a night's lodging in the "black" street, Drury Lane, "Bastille," usually means a month's hard labor in Fentonville prison to follow. The casual ward of the parish of St. Oswald is not far from a main thoroughfare and is not open until eight p.m. On the occasion when fate caused me to seek its shelter I had about thirty companions in misery—all ragged, all dirty and all down at heel. We were hustled into a large room, which had, of course, that harsh and chilling aspect common to all workhouses. The "labor master"—they used to be called "tramp masters"—who had admitted us took us to a table and commenced to take our names, etc. This was the way in which he went about it.

"Now, then, No. 1, come on, if you are a coming." The man nearest the bully crawled forward, hat in hand and body bent forward, the very picture of abjectness.

"What's your name—if you're got one?"

"Timothy Snooks."

"Fine name that. How old do you call yourself?"

"Forty, please, sir."

"I don't please. What are you?"

"Nothing."

"No! I should think," granted Bully, "made an entry of some kind."

"Where did you sleep last night?"

"Nowhere."

"Nowhere?" repeated Bully. "Ain't you a-going back to their same place?"

"No answer."

"Where are you going to?"

"Anywhere."

"Anywhere! Here, that won't do for me. You must say where you're going, even if it's only to make a hole in the water." Bully laughed at his own poor wit. Snooks muttered something and Bully wrote it down.

"Have you got any money?"

"No."

"Then take everything out of your pockets and pitch 'em into that basket," pointing to one close by. And so went on the examination.

At last came my turn. Bully, who was evidently not a bad judge of men, once discovered that I did not belong to the habitual tramp brigade; and accordingly, in order to aggravate me, put an additional question—viz: "Are you a good hand at picking pockets?"

"No."

"Well, that's all right. You'll have a good spell of it to-morrow."

Now came the food. A regular soup, or, in other words, carrying a wooden tray upon which were slices of bread, and each casual was ordered to take one slice. This was our supper. Having eaten it, we were marched to a shed and were told to undress. Then each man had to walk across a courtyard and plunge into a bath of water. The one supply of water did for the whole crowd at some provincial nunnery, notably Melton Mowbray and Northampton, the same uncleanly kind of cleanliness prevailed, and soap there was not. Next we were marched to the dormitory, which is simply a brick-floored shed like a barn, along the sides of which were ranged rows of what looked like shallow coffins, but which I, from previous experience gained at the Salvation Army salvage wharf at Battersea, knew to be sleeping berths without bottoms except the floor of bricks. In each of these was a straw palliase and one rug or blanket. As we had left our clothes down up in the dormitory, it may be imagined how we shivered that winter night through.

At six in the morning a bell rang and the tramp master entered. "Now, then," he roared out, "out of it, all of you! Tumble out! No skulking here. Roll up your mattresses and put your shirts on top of 'em." (I forgot to mention that each man had been given a "collection" of holes with rags around them.) supposed to be a night shirt, when he left the "bath" over night. Quickly we dressed and then marched out into the yard. Some of the men were selected as cleaners, others as stone breakers and others as casual paupers. I was among the last. Each man was handed a bundle of short pieces of tarry rope, almost as hard as iron. These were to be unravelled into yarn yarn almost as fine as flax effie. (There was a time when such a task would have seemed to me impossible. But practice and experience, if they do not make perfect, at least teach one to make the best of a bad job.)

For dinner we were served out six portions of bread and one and a quarter portions of moist cheese; for supper, the same as for breakfast. Then we were marched off to "bed" (7). At six a. m. we were turned out into the streets—breakfast.

Some Old News.

The "tame" of Ethiopia deposits stores of honey without wax. It looks like a giant mosquito, and its product, which it hides away underground, is eagerly sought after by the natives as a remedy for diseases of the throat.

In some parts of India there are giant bees which suspend combs as big as houses from the branches of trees. The combcombs have the size of a pigeon's egg and not in combs. The bees, which are extremely small, have no stings, and are of a black color, and the honey which they produce is of an oily consistency, never hardening.

VOODOOISM OF TODAY.

The Mysterious Power Exercised by a Kentucky Negro.

About the close of the war a powerfully-built negro calling himself Eliza Broadbent made his appearance in the vicinity of Russellville, Ky. At that time, says the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, he appeared to be about seventy years old, though vigorous as a mule. He established himself in the small log hut which he has occupied continuously since. The new arrival immediately became a man of prominence in a peculiar way among the negroes of this entire section of the country. They were unable to pronounce the old negro's name, and it was corrupted into "Lige Broad A-z." Before the old man had resided in the vicinity a year miraculous powers were attributed to him by the ignorant negroes. A few of the colored people were too intelligent to be deceived, but his influence with the majority was so great that those better informed were not anxious to assert their skepticism. To some "Lige Broad A-z" was a voodoo doctor and commanding. To the whites to others he was the high priest of black magic and in league with the devil, commanding at will with demons and departed spirits. To all his race, with few exceptions, he was the embodiment of good and evil as he preferred to exercise his influence, and a terror generally. Even to the white population "Uncle Lige," as he was commonly known, was always an enigma. In their presence he was universally polite and humble, though among his colored acquaintances arrogant and commanding. To the white children the aged negro was never known to be otherwise than kind, though the fear he inspired among the negroes by his reputation as a voodoo doctor was shared in an exaggerated form by them. He was known to do a heavy traffic in charms, amulets, etc., among the negroes. The purchase was supposed to carry good luck or impart misfortune, as the old voodoo priest dictated. They did not doubt his power to "trick" anyone who had incurred his displeasure, though when questioned by a white person as to the miraculous powers attributed to him by the negroes the old negro always hastily denied such claims and vehemently protested that they were merely the inventions of his enemies. To the negroes, however, old "Lige" would deny that he had ever told the "white folks" that he was not a high priest of voodooism, possessed of divine attributes and familiar with the mystery of human existence.

For the past quarter of a century the locality has been disturbed periodically by accusations against the old wizard by members of his race who believed that they had been placed under a "spell" for some fancied slight or because he was paid to do so by their enemy. These complaints were of various forms. In one case the victim of the old negro's pretensions alleged that he had forced him to swallow a piece of corn knife in his sleep. He could feel the point cutting its way through his flesh. He was examined by physicians and appeared to be suffering all the tortures incident to the introduction of a metallic substance in the human stomach. After lingering several days in awful delirium, in which he repeatedly claimed that he had been "tricked" by old "Lige Broad A-z," the victim died. A post-mortem investigation was made. The stomach was frightfully swollen and inflamed, but if, as was believed, the negro had been poisoned, the drug used was so subtle as to defy surgical skill to detect its presence. This only served to convince the negroes more thoroughly of the voodoo doctor's knowledge of the black art.

The old voodoo doctor's influence among the negroes of southern Kentucky has increased of late years. This is partially attributed to the fact that though he has resided here more than a quarter of a century, he has not perceptibly aged since that time. He is almost as vigorous now as when he made his appearance in this locality. The best authorities agree that the old negro is more than one hundred years old. He is not positive as to his age. Familiarity with events early in the present century indicates that he was probably born in the last decade of the eighteenth century. He was brought to New Orleans in 1809 by a French planter who left Cuba at the outbreak of the war between France and Spain. The old voodoo priest prefers to be silent on this subject, as he desires to impress his race with the fact of his great age. He declares that he is one hundred and forty years of age, and that he will never die, having discovered the elixir of immortality. Many of these negroes assert that the secret of his longevity is that he occasionally takes the form of a vampire and repairs his shattered constitution with the blood of his younger victims. The power of old "Lige" to inhabit the body of animals at will is not questioned by many of those under his influence.

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